



Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory  
Board

volunteer board members advising agencies of the  
state on policies, programs, and facilities for bicycles  
and pedestrians.



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**Testimony in support of SB #720: AN ACT CREATING PENALTIES FOR CAUSING  
HARM TO, OR THE DEATH OF, A VULNERABLE USER OF A PUBLIC WAY**

***Submitted by: The Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board***

***Members:*** Ray Rauth (Chair), Alan Sylvestre (Vice Chair), Jason Stockmann (Secretary), Deb Dauphinais, Rod Parlee, Charles Beristain, Richard Stowe, John Ferguson, Thomas Gutman, Thomas Harned, Neil Pade

The Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board has voted to support SB 720, *An Act Creating Penalties for Causing Harm To, Or Death Of, A Vulnerable User of a Public Way*. Bicyclists, pedestrians, and other vulnerable users have equal rights to the use of our roadways as do the drivers of motorized vehicles. In accordance with state statutes, all road users, including vulnerable users, have a responsibility to use our roadways in a safe manner that demonstrates awareness of and courtesy towards other road users. These responsibilities include minimizing driver distractions; paying attention to the road ahead of us and around us; observing crosswalks, intersections, and other areas where multiple users interact; and allowing safe distances when passing, overtaking, or turning in front of a slower moving vehicle, or vulnerable user. When collisions do occur, the severity of impacts on vulnerable users is almost without exception much greater than on drivers in enclosed motorized vehicles. Sadly, far too often vulnerable users suffer either injuries, serious injury or death. When the vulnerable user is abiding by all appropriate roadway laws in a responsible manner and these collisions occur as the result of a driver not using the roadway in a responsible manner and/or as designated by law, our current laws do not adequately address the serious nature of these offenses.

Law enforcement officers do not have ample penalties available to them for use in these circumstances, when the value of the human life maimed or lost is under-valued under current law. For example, when a pedestrian is properly using a crosswalk and is hit by a driver who is not paying adequate attention to the road, an infraction citing failure to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk clearly fails to adequately represent the severity of the offense. While no penalty can restore the damage done, larger penalties, including mandated re-training, serve to increase awareness, decrease repeat offenses, and provide at least some sense of justice should a tragedy occur that would have been prevented by responsible use of the roadway.

We wish to thank the Transportation Committee and the Connecticut General Assembly for its support of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly legislation in the last few legislative sessions. In 2009 the Transportation Committee was the first committee to support the Complete Streets bill, which in July was signed into law by Governor Rell as PA 09-154, An Act Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Access. PA 09-154 enabled the creation of our board: the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board. Our responsibilities, as defined by this law, include, but are not limited to, "examining the need for bicycle and pedestrian transportation, promoting programs and facilities for bicycles and pedestrians in this state, and advising appropriate agencies of the state on policies, programs and facilities for bicycles and pedestrians." The Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board looks forward to continuing its work toward a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly Connecticut. We urge you to support the vulnerable user bill as we believe it can truly save lives. Thank you for your consideration of this important and much-needed legislation.